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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: INDONESIA ESTH HIGHLIGHTS: FEBRUARY 2008

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ENVIRONMENT

SENATOR LEAHY PRAISES PRESIDENT YUDHOYONO

11. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) praised Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on the January 30 Congressional Record for his engagement on forestry and orangutan protection. President Yudhoyono highlighted the link between orangutan protection, forest conservation, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on December 10 at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting in Bali. Senator Leahy stated that President Yudhoyono had done a great service to the orangutan conservation effort, and that his comments represent the GOI's recognition of the need for orangutan protection.

DECREASING PLASTIC BAG USE IN BANDUNG

12. On February 2, the State Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) held an event to campaign for a decrease in the use of plastic bags in Bandung. The event included hundreds of students, as well as celebrities and environmental activists. ITB lecturer Muhammad Chairul estimated

that plastic waste currently makes up 10 percent of total waste produced in Indonesia, and only a small portion of it is recycled. He warned that plastic wastes require 300-500 years to decompose, and that the burning of plastic waste contributes to air pollution.

EARTHQUAKES HIT MENTAWAI ISLANDS

13. Two earthquakes measuring 7.0 and 7.3 on the Richter scale hit Pagai Utara Island in the Mentawai Islands regency, West Sumatra, on February 25 and 26. Saumanganyak village, located on the western tip of Pagai Utara Island, was the hardest-hit due to its proximity to the earthquake's epicenter. The Indonesian meteorological agency issued a tsunami warning, and then lifted it after about 45 minutes.

TANGERANG PLANS TO BUILD NEW WELLS

14. Tangerang Municipality's Housing and Settlement Agency announced plans to build five large wells in four districts. Mayor Wahidin Halim stated that degradation in water quality and abundance has accelerated the local government's plans to install the wells. The planned wells will supply 300 liters of clean water per second.

INDONESIA WILL HOST 2008 BASEL CONVENTION COP

15. On February 9, the MOE announced that Indonesia would host of the Ninth Basel Convention Conference of Parties (COP). The Basel Convention, an environmental agreement on hazardous and other wastes, aims to protect human health and the environment against the

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adverse effects resulting from the generation, management, trans-boundary movements and disposal of hazardous and other wastes. Around 1,000 delegates from 179 countries are expected to attend the Basel COP on June 23-27, 2008 in Bali.

GOI NEARS TREE PLANTING TARGETS

16. On February 5, Minister of Forestry M.S. Kaban announced that the GOI was close to achieving its national tree planting targets under a campaign started in November 2003. Minister Kaban reported that central and local government and communities participants had planted 74 million trees in 150,000 hectares across Indonesia. He added that the government would continue campaigning to increase public awareness on the need for new trees to be planted. The Ministry hopes that through its tree planting initiative, it can become the national source for new timber, beginning in 2012.

MANGROVE PLANTING PROGRAM KICKED OFF

17. Under a program called "Planting 50,000 Mangroves", the Tunas Hijau Club in Surabaya organized dozens of junior and senior high school students to plant mangroves along the Wonorejo River in Surabaya. They planted more than 9,600 mangroves on February 7, 2008. They plan to plant 50,000 mangroves during 2008 in an effort to save mangrove forests in Surabaya. Currently, only 60% of mangrove forests in Surabaya still survive.

PROTESTS AGAINST BAKRIE HOUSING PROJECT IN MALANG

18. Environmental activists in Malang demonstrated against the development of a luxury-housing complex by Bakrie Land Development in green space in Malang. The company is planning to build more than 280 luxury houses and the supporting facilities on 28.5 hectares of land in Malang. Protestors accused Bakrie Land Development, Inc. of violating local city planning regulations, and stated that the slated site is a green space and cannot be used for housing without violating the law.

¶9. Indonesian National Police believe roughly 5,088 fishing vessels regularly operate in Indonesia's far eastern waters, most of which regularly harbor in Tual, the capital of Maluku Tenggara Regency. The area is a hotbed for maritime poachers, according to Indonesian National Police and local media reports. When police seized 14 fishing vessels for alleged poaching just off Tual and Benjina islands in November and December 2007, they arrested 306 crew members from Thailand, two from Myanmar, and 18 from Indonesia. Continued raids on poachers have highlighted the difficulty faced by Indonesian enforcement agencies and the scale of the problem. The National Police's Deputy Director for Special Crimes, Sr. Commander Sadar Sebayang, said a fishing vessel operating in Arafura could net fish worth at least Rp 20 billion (\$2,187,596.13) per catch, while income received by the regency reached only around Rp 8 billion (\$875,065.66) annually in the form of local fees.

TEAM SEIZES 32,000 LOGS IN WEST KALIMANTAN

¶10. On February 7, a joint team of Indonesian military, police and forest rangers seized 32,000 logs and arrested 800 persons in Kapuas River, Sintang and Kapuas Hulu regencies, West Kalimantan. The team suspected that the logs were illegal when the arrested persons produced incorrect documentation for the timber. Commander-in-chief of Military Resort 121/Alambhana Wanawai, Colonel (Inf) Edi Susanto, said that the arrests followed on from a previous seizure of 2,500 illegal logs in January 2008. The investigating team found that the logs came from four sub-districts in Kapuas Hulu regency (Martinus, Mandai, Embaloh and Banut).

THREE RIVERS IN CENTRAL KALIMANTAN POLLUTED

¶11. The Central Kalimantan Environmental Management and Conservation Office (BPPLHD) announced on February 13 that it had discovered high mercury levels in three area rivers (the Barito,

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Kahayan and Kapuas rivers). The team found that Kahayan River had mercury concentrations of 2,966-4,687 micrograms per liter, and Barito River had 5,519 micrograms per liter. In Kapuas River, the mercury concentration reached 7,029 micrograms per liter (Note: the maximum safe level of mercury concentration is 2,000 micrograms per liter). BPPLHD stated that the mercury pollution came from illegal gold mining activities using mercury in the mining process.

FRESHWATER DOLPHIN FOUND IN EAST KALIMANTAN

¶12. A Kayan Mentarang National Park Management survey team discovered that the Sesayap River in East Kalimantan serves as another habitat for "pesut" - freshwater dolphins (Orcaella brevirostris). Scientists had previously only found the species in the Mahakam River and Balikpapan Bay. The team found seven of these freshwater dolphins in Sesino Bay and Lubok Langit waters, which come from the Sesayap River.

JAMBI RELEASES ITS 100TH ORANGUTAN INTO THE WILD

¶13. The Jambi Nature Conservation Office (BKSDA) released five orangutans from North Sumatra Animal Quarantine to Bukit Tigapuluh National Park on February 18. Before releasing the orangutans into the wild, the BKSDA team trains orangutans on how to survive in the forest. The Frankfurt Zoological Society supports the adaptation process.

UNIVERSITY UNVEILS HYDRO-FUEL INVENTIONS

¶14. A team of researchers at Yogyakarta's Muhammadiyah University (UMY) unveiled a water-based hydro-fuel as a potential alternative to kerosene and other fuels on February 19. The team developed four variants of the hydro-fuel, patented as "Banyugeni": hydro-kerosene, hydro-diesel, hydro-premium and hydro-avtur (airplane fuel). University Rector Khoiruddin Bashori stated that the team plans to try mass production of the fuels to help Indonesia reallocate its annual fuel subsidy of Rp 50 trillion (\$5.5 billion) to pay off foreign debts.

JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT FIND POTENTIAL HYDROCARBON RESOURCES

¶15. On February 12, the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT) announced that a joint BPPT and German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) survey indicated potential hydrocarbon resources in the waters off Simeuleu Island, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. BPPT will continue its research to measure the potential volumes of oil and gas available. BPPT added that it and BGR also found potential hydrocarbon resources in Bengkulu (Sumatra), Banten (Java), Lombok (West Nusa Tenggara), and the Sulawesi Sea.

HEALTH

HIV/AIDS CASES INCREASE IN NORTH SUMATRA

¶16. The head of the North Sumatra Health Office, Chandra Syafei, announced that the number of HIV/AIDS cases in the province has risen over the past two years. In 2007, he reported the number of cases was 460, with 41 deaths, up from 415 cases in 2006. Chandra added that there were 48 new cases with 15 deaths as of the start of wQjqQjQwed by heterosexuals with multiple sex partners.

MALNUTRITION IN EAST NUSA TENGGARA (NTT)

¶17. Rote Ndao Regency's Government in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province has declared malnutrition a serious public health threat. Five children died in a single month due to malnutrition. Unfortunately, the government has not allocated a budget to handle malnutrition in 2008. In 2007, Rote Ndao allocated Rp. 10,000 (\$1.09) per day, per child for children who suffer from

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malnutrition. However, most citizens and even the head of the Regency's health department were unaware of this source of funds. Many parents do not have money to bring their children to the hospital and an estimated 100 children are now reported to be malnourished at home without proper medical treatment.

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